The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2009/332)

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Djinnit to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Costa to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/332, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Said Djinnit and Mr. Antonio Maria Costa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Said Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit: I feel particularly privileged to address the Security Council on the situation in West Africa and the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) over the last six months. Let me start by stressing the obvious, which is that West Africa is part of the African continent. Therefore, the search for solutions to West African problems cannot be dissociated from the overall peace efforts on the African continent.

The trends of conflicts in Africa show that, since the early 1990s, West Africa has been a laboratory for peace and security. On the one hand, the subregion has had more than its fair share of violent conflicts, with dire consequences for development, stability and human security. On the other hand, however, experience shows that West Africa has learned much from that difficult experience and has emerged as one of the African subregions with the strongest determination and the most effective institutional framework to respond to challenges posed by political instability and armed conflict.

The commitment of West African peacekeeping forces, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia and Sierra Leone and other contributions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member States to efforts aimed at addressing the conflicts that afflicted the subregion, including in the Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Togo, are a testimony to the strong political will of West African leaders and people to remain at the forefront of peace efforts in their subregion.

The report before you (S/2009/332) presents the state of peace and security in West Africa over the past six months and the efforts deployed by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) to support initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges of peace and stability in the subregion. The report underscores the progress in the overall peace and security situation in the subregion, especially the positive developments registered in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding and progress in the area of governance and the rule of law.

More precisely, the determination of West Africa to address its crises decisively with the support of the United Nations and the wider international community, as well as its efforts to strengthen institutions, governance and the rule of law and to enhance the role of civil society including women, has led to an important reduction in the scope and level of violence across the subregion. Indeed, there is currently no open armed conflict going on in West Africa. The impact of armed violence on State institutions and societies,

illustrated, for instance, by the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, has significantly decreased.

Peace operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone are steadily moving forward towards post-conflict recovery and peace consolidation. In Guinea-Bissau, the first round of presidential elections has just been concluded and declared free, fair and transparent, while the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau is transforming itself into an integrated office for better coordination of activities with all stakeholders so as to tackle the formidable peacebuilding challenges in that country.

It is important to emphasize that the significant progress achieved by West Africa in the area of peace, security and stability remains extremely fragile, as the root causes of conflict and instability persist. In some cases, this progress is reversible, as illustrated by the recent democratic setback in Mauritania, the prevailing crisis in the Niger and other looming crises in the subregion. Moreover, a number of growing or emerging challenges, which include terrorist activities in the Sahel band, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, governance problems, drug trafficking and organized crime, jeopardize ongoing peace efforts in the subregion. The potential impact of those threats on international security should not be underestimated.

Meanwhile, the social and economic situation remains precarious, as a result of the combined effects of factors such as high demographic growth, declining economic growth, rapid urbanization, youth unemployment, climate change and food insecurity. That is further exacerbated by the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on West African economies, which is deepening and is increasingly destabilizing.

Allow me to highlight three specific challenges to peace and security in West Africa that have continued to require special attention and considerable efforts during the past six months. The resurgence of unconstitutional or violent changes of Government emerged as one of the most alarming threats to peace and stability in West Africa. Considering the strong destabilizing effects of such events, the Security Council decided, a few weeks ago, to focus on the challenge of unconstitutional changes in Africa.

It was particularly welcome in West Africa that the Council, in its presidential statement dated 5 May 2009, expressed

> "its deep concern over the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in a few African countries" (*S/PRST/2009/11, p. 1*)

and called attention to

> "the possible violence that may accompany such events as well as the negative impact on economic and social welfare of the people and the development of affected countries." (*ibid, p. 1*)

Against that background, allow me to recall that all of the unconstitutional changes of government that have taken place in Africa recently, with the exception of the case of Madagascar, occurred in West Africa. A failed coup attempt has also been reported in the subregion in the period under review.

The United Nations and its Office for West Africa have been playing an active role in the collective efforts that have been deployed to address the political crises that have emerged following those unconstitutional changes of government. In Mauritania, efforts spearheaded by the Facilitation Team, comprising Senegal, the African Union and the United Nations, culminated in the signing, in early June, of a framework agreement between the main political forces, which paved the way to the return to constitutional order in the country and the preparation of presidential elections scheduled for 18 July 2009. The leadership provided by Senegal and the Facilitation Team and their determination, combined with the unprecedented example of collaboration between international organizations and individual countries in promoting a consensual way out of the crisis in Mauritania, should be commended and emulated when tackling similar situations in the subregion and the continent as a whole.

Meanwhile, in Mauritania we are faced with the challenge of creating conditions for a free and fair electoral process, despite a very tight schedule and a rather difficult political environment, as a result of the mistrust and conflicting interests among the various parties represented in the consensual transitional institutions, including the Independent Electoral Commission.

In Guinea, efforts continue within the framework of the International Contact Group, albeit in a context

of mounting concerns about the pace and timing of the transition. The forthcoming meeting of the International Contact Group scheduled for 16 and 17 July in Conakry should provide the opportunity for a critical review of the situation in that country in the light of the commitment of the authorities to the time frame leading to elections before the end of the year. On that occasion, the International Contact Group is also expected to devise ways and means to revamp the process.

In Togo, UNOWA, in liaison with ECOWAS, has been encouraging the main stakeholders to create propitious conditions for organizing peaceful and democratic presidential elections in 2010. It has also been collaborating closely with the United Nations country team, the Government and ECOWAS to address critical issues related to security and elections.

Closely related to unconstitutional changes of government in West Africa is the recurrent question of security sector reform. Council members will recall that the mission of the Security Council to West Africa from 26 June to 5 July 2003 noted in its report that

> "in each country which has been a source of instability in the subregion in recent years the issue of the reform of the security sector is of paramount importance". (*S/2003/688, para. 68*).

Six years later, the challenge of security sector reform remains a pending and burning issue in a number of countries in the subregion. As part of its activities on security sector reform, the United Nations Office for West Africa has initiated a process aimed at clarifying the role of the security sector and other institutions and enhancing their capacity in providing security during electoral processes in West Africa. This initiative, jointly carried out with ECOWAS, United Nations country teams and Governments, is going on, with interventions planned in countries where critical elections are scheduled in 2009 and 2010.

There are other recurrent security challenges in West Africa. Drug trafficking is currently one of the most prominent. Indeed, the subregion has emerged as an important route of transit for drug trafficking, particularly of cocaine from Latin America to Europe, with drug trafficking networks taking advantage of the weaknesses of West African States, including porous borders, abundant unemployed youth, widespread corruption and poverty. The measures taken by West African States, with the support of the United Nations, to combat drug trafficking and criminal activities — especially the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa — deserve unflinching support.

In addition to the important contribution the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been making in supporting subregional efforts at addressing this plight, UNOWA is expected to play an increasing role in channelling efforts towards achieving common goals, including those outlined in the ECOWAS plan of action. Tomorrow, here in New York, ECOWAS, the Department of Political Affairs, UNOWA, UNODC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL will launch the West Africa Coast Initiative. This joint programme is aimed at building the capacity of the police and law enforcement agencies in four pilot countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau — thus allowing them to more effectively prevent and combat organized crime and drug trafficking. I take this opportunity to appeal for the full support of Security Council members and the international community as a whole for these and other efforts to facilitate the implementation of the ECOWAS action plan.

Before concluding, I wish to stress that, to be effective in West Africa, action on cross-border and regional challenges to peace and security should take place as part of a broader, comprehensive strategy of conflict resolution and crisis prevention. In this context, UNOWA will continue to promote and strengthen a regional and integrated approach to cross-border issues in the subregion.

The United Nations, through its various entities, has been providing a highly appreciated contribution to assist the subregion to face its daunting socio-economic and development challenges. In this respect, UNOWA will pursue its efforts aimed at promoting synergies within the United Nations regional system and situating the role and contribution of each entity within the overall objective of the United Nations, that of achieving lasting peace, stability and progress in the subregion, and its vision of delivering as one.

Collaboration with national authorities, civil society and other international actors, in accordance with their respective mandates, will remain a priority. UNOWA will continue to work closely with regional

organizations, especially ECOWAS, which play a critical role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In particular, it will pursue the promising avenue of triangular collaboration between the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union that it has promoted in the past months, especially in preventive action.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and of the Follow-Up Committee on the implementation of the Greentree Agreement, I, along with my team, will continue to provide support for the ongoing demarcation process of the boundary between the two countries. Particular attention will be given to promoting confidence-building measures between the two countries, addressing the problems faced by the affected population along the boundary and encouraging bilateral cooperation in tackling common security threats in the Bakassi peninsula and beyond, with the support of partners in the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Security Council for the attention it continues to devote to West Africa and for its support to the United Nations Office for West Africa.

The President: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa.

Mr. Costa: Let me start by congratulating the Council, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Djinnit, because, during the past three years, I have brought to the Council's attention — in this very Chamber — the threat posed by drug trafficking to the security of West Africa. All concerned have responded pro-actively. Today, I am pleased to report, on the basis of the evidence that was disclosed in the *World Drug Report* a few weeks ago, that the volume of drug trafficking through the region of West Africa seems to be diminishing, and significantly so. It is evident from the lower volume of seizures in West Africa — there have been none, zero, in 2009 so far — and from the sharp decline in the number of air couriers coming from West Africa to Europe. That decline has been major — about a 35 per cent drop over a few months.

Again, I congratulate Member States in the region, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Special Representative for responding so effectively to the crisis.

Of course, the situation remains very volatile. Around 20 tons of cocaine are still transiting through the region every year, valued at about $1 billion at its destination, mostly the European market. There is no guarantee, therefore, that the downward trend will continue.

Recent upheavals in Guinea-Bissau and in Guinea show that there are powerful forces with a stake in illicit activity. Until the underlying conditions of vulnerability in the region — poverty, underdevelopment and inadequate governance — are addressed, the region will remain attractive to those who operate outside the law and abuse authority for personal gain.

There are also other risks. First, we know that drug trafficking is being displaced from West Africa to the Sahel in North Africa, and especially down the south-west coast, towards Southern Africa. Traffickers are simply diversifying the routes, having met opposition in West Africa.

Secondly and more important, drugs are not the only illicit flows or the only illicit activity. Today, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is releasing a threat assessment on transnational trafficking in West Africa. I think it has been distributed to Council members. It is a brand-new document, not yet released to the press. It contains a great deal of data and many graphs, showing that West Africa is still under attack by smugglers of arms, people, counterfeit medicines, toxic waste, cigarettes and oil and other natural resources. In short, organized crime makes West Africa much more prone to political instability and, of course, much less able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As Ambassador Djinnit has already mentioned, in order to tackle the threat posed by organized crime, UNODC has teamed up with the Department for Political Affairs, Ambassador Djinnit's United Nations Office for West Africa, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the International Criminal Police Organization to support the action plan of the Economic Community of West African States against drugs and crime, the implementation of which is to be monitored by the Security Council. We are establishing transnational crime units in Guinea-

Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to complement peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. I believe that to be innovative and promising as well.

My Office is also providing technical assistance to strengthen criminal justice and crime-fighting capacity, for example in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, and soon in Mali and Sierra Leone. Our support for the judicial police in Guinea-Bissau has been instrumental in assisting the commission investigating the killings of the President and the chief of army.

Working together with DPKO — and this is something that is new for us — we have put police advisors on the ground. But much more is needed throughout the region to support the process of security-sector reform. Too often, the monopoly that a State has on the use of force is abused for the enrichment of a select few. Indeed, the recent military and other coups underline the need for civilian oversight of armed forces and for the restoration of the constitutional order, as we are now seeing in Mauritania.

Affected States also need the hardware to confront criminal groups, which are often better equipped than the police itself, or even the army. A number of West African presidents and senior ministers have appealed to have their countries provided with the means to protect their borders, their coasts and their airspace. I urge all members of the Council to answer that call and to provide the hardware, patrol boats, helicopters and radar that are desperately needed to defend the sovereignty of those countries against the onslaught of organized crime. The bottom line is to strengthen the rule of law in West Africa. That is vital for efforts to reduce vulnerability to organized crime and the corruption that enables it. I urge the Governments of the region to implement United Nations conventions against corruption and organized crime.

In conclusion, I invite all the members of the Council to put the situation in West Africa in a global perspective. We must not overlook the fact that most illicit activity is only transiting via West Africa. It is not originating there and it is not ending there. Rich countries, particularly in Europe, should assume their responsibilities by curbing their appetite for drugs — as indeed drugs transiting through West Africa are bound for Europe — cheap labour and the human beings who are modern-day slaves being smuggled through the region. In particular, my Office is asking rich countries to stop using West Africa as a dumping ground for weapons, waste and fake medicines.

The report to which I just referred includes some terrible statistics pertaining to oil bunkering, which derives from the theft of 10 per cent of the region's oil output, as well as to sources of pollution, corruption and revenues for insurgents. Eighty per cent of the cigarettes marketed in North and West Africa is of illicit origin. Fifty to 60 per cent of all medications used in West Africa is counterfeit or substandard. Africa is a major destination for electronic waste, including old computers and telephones. A good percentage of European e-waste, in fact 8.7 million tons, goes to Africa. All of that must come to an end.

I began by thanking and congratulating all the members of the Council, for our experience has shown that joint action can indeed contain crime. In addition to the statistics I have just reported, we have seen that success with the Kimberly Process against blood diamonds and the Bamako Convention on hazardous wastes. We hope to see the same results with the Praia process against drug trafficking. Let us therefore unite to disrupt other forms of illicit activity, which are causing so much pain in Africa. I thank the Council for its support.

The President: I thank Mr. Costa for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.